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## DPI VISTA Monthly

### 10 Activities to Plan Now for Year-End and Summer

By Ruth Anne Landsverk

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#### Save the Dates!

**March 8:**

Volunteer Management  
Webinar

**March 23:**

VISTA Monthly Check-in



Visualize small snowbanks....no snowbanks....blades of green grass... flowers... Summer! It's not too early to start planning how to use those summer months productively. In fact, several of you are already doing so.

If you start planning now, your family-school-community partnerships will continue to prosper June through August AND the transition into and out of consecutive school years will be a smooth one for your Action Team. What can you do now?

1. **Plan summer learning activities that improve school goals.** Hint: this is where community collaboration comes in handy through events in public libraries, parks, the YMCA or Boys and Girls Club, and the faith community. Be sure to visit the DPI webpage for lots of great information about the 2010 Wisconsin Summer Library Program (<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/pld/slp.html>).
2. **Conduct an end-of-the-year celebration** to recognize the achievements of your Partnership Action Team. Have a "Celebrate Success" Day at school to honor volunteers, business partnerships, parents, staff, and students. One school took a whole week to celebrate success: <http://www.csos.ihu.edu/p2000/PPP/2004/pdf/55.pdf>.
3. If your school or district offers a **school breakfast program** during the summer, work with program

staff to make reading and math refreshers an every-morning event.

4. To improve plans for next year, **conduct an end-of-year evaluation.** See p. 330 in the *School, Family, and Community Partnerships Handbook for Action* for a year-end evaluation form and many other evaluation tools and considerations. Or, take some time to review and discuss the following, basic questions: A. What did you learn about partnerships at your school during the past year as a result of your action team? B. Based on your experience this year, what will you do differently next year? What will you do the same? C. What practice or activity had the most positive impact on the most students? What made it successful? D. What can we do to involve more families, students, and staff in successful partnerships next year?
5. Keep your connections with the National Network of Partnership Schools strong by submitting a **Promising Partnership Practice by May 1** and an **UPDATE survey by June 30**. NNPS waives the annual fee for members who complete and submit the annual UPDATE, online or on paper.
6. **Conduct an end-of-year survey of families and teachers.** If you did a start-of-the-year survey, compare changes. If not, use the end-of-year survey to guide next year's efforts. Look on the VISTA Google page under Classic VISTA (<http://sites.google.com/site/dpivistaproject/resources-1/classic-family-school-community-partnership-vista-resources>) for a host of sample surveys to tailor to your own needs.
7. **Host a Summer Learning Fair** in March or April so families know about learning and recreational opportunities available to children June through August. Work with community groups to set up displays, hand out brochures, and feature healthy activities and refreshments for families anticipating more time outdoors.
8. **Poll Action Team members.** Who will continue on next year's team? Get recommendations for replacements and put together a handout with a brief description of specific time commitment and responsibilities that Action Team membership entails. Start now to publicize anticipated openings in the school newsletter, website, and other venues.
9. **How will next year's team be trained?** It's not too early to assign a date and time for late summer/early fall training of next year's Action Team.
10. Mark your calendar to attend the **Annual Parent Leadership Conference:** Sept. 29 at the Monona Terrace, Madison. It's most effective to bring several team members!

# The Library is NOT a Warehouse for Books

by Josh Cowles

I was recently at a meeting at the Fond du Lac Public Library. Person A was explaining a program to educate children about the local geography in a fun, hands-on way. Person B said, "I just don't understand what this has to do with books and reading!"

On a different day, I caught the elevator upstairs with a library patron. The person told me that they hadn't been to the library in years and said, "I'm surprised this place still exists, what with the Internet and all..."

My supervisor calls this the "warehouse for books" library model. For those of us who are Library VISTAs, we don't need to be told that the library is more than just a warehouse for books because we are the living embodiment of an opposite model—many forward-looking public libraries have been transforming into community centers for years. We know how dynamic our libraries can be and we are lucky to have supervisors who share that view. However, it is easy to forget that there are people operating under the assumption that libraries are primarily warehouses for books. These people might be patrons, local government officials, board members, potential community partners, and even staff at your site. All of these people can put up roadblocks to our projects. We may not be able to change their minds, but we should be prepared for the opportunity.

It is hard to blame certain library stakeholders for wanting to focus on books. They make up the bulk of the collection, they are easily quantifiable, and circulation can be directly tied to some sources of funding. For instance, libraries receive reimbursements from the county based on the number of items circulated to rural residents throughout the year. Sometimes when the objection is that the program doesn't promote reading, it may be just as much an objection that the program doesn't promote circulation.

On the other hand, community programming and participation at the library have the potential to generate a more important kind of support—community ownership. The impact of programming may be harder to quantify than circulation. It may end up being more expensive per person served. But it still increases the number of people through the doors, often people who do not regularly use the library. Most importantly, these people feel well served by their library's programs which are almost always free, and they feel better about supporting their library when it comes to funding (through taxes or donations), as well as volunteering. Even people who don't take advantage of the library's offerings but see the weekly listing of library events in the newspaper may feel more like their library is working hard for the community, and be more willing to support it.

Since I am preaching to the choir about community-centric libraries, let's just get straight to some resources, both for you and those stuck on the warehouse model.

## Library 2.0 – A Reading List

<http://www.squidoo.com/library20>

Library 2.0 is, among other things, about going beyond offering online information resources to offering both online and offline user-centered services, and opportunities for user participation and creation. By bringing some of this community ownership-generating power to the web, it welcomes a whole new segment of the community and gives existing users new ways to participate.

## Programming Librarian

<http://programminglibrarian.org>

Check out this site, especially the blog archives, for some interesting ideas and examples. It is definitely worth perusing. They also post notices about library programming grant opportunities which could prove useful to some VISTAs.

## The Thriving Library

Block, M. (2007). *The thriving library: Successful strategies for challenging times*. Medford, NJ: Information Today.

Check worldcat.org to find a nearby library that has it. It focuses on specific ways libraries are thriving by generating overwhelming community support and buy-in by meeting community needs and finding a niche in the community to fill.



## Erica's Corner

by Erica Spurgeon

**Q: "How do you combat that "lowly little VISTA" mentality, with regards to how others treat you, in a hierarchical work environment?"**

**A:** Dear "Lowly", this is a great question, especially since most of us are, for the first time, entering a professional work environment. Here are 7 things that I think we need to remember when working in a hierarchical work environment:

**Have a good attitude.** Things will get tough but remember why you're there and remember you're truly making a difference one person at a time.

**Let It Roll.** If you feel like your co-workers or superiors are "yelling" at you or disrespecting you just let it roll off your back. This may be extremely hard to do but it will be extremely useful.

**Be Creative.** Show others that you have great ideas and you can create positive change through your work.

**Be Appreciative.** You know what it's like to feel "lowly" so make it your special effort to make others feel good about themselves. This can be a simple compliment or a smile. This may force people to find good traits so they can return the compliment.

**Work Hard.** You may feel that you and your work are unappreciated and that you're not making a difference so you may want to slack off. **DO NOT DO THIS.** Know that you are making a difference.

**Respect Yourself.** Eleanor Roosevelt understood this perfectly when she said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

**Time.** Remember, earning respect will take time. In the meantime connect with other VISTAs or AmeriCorps members, they may be dealing with the same thing.

Unfortunately, many of us may deal with these issues in the workplace. Learning to deal with them now will help us in the long run. Keep your head up high and remember there is a lesson to be learned in every situation, good or bad.

## Recipe of the Month: Kale Chips

By Abby Churchill

### Ingredients:

1 bunch kale, torn  
olive oil  
desired spices

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Tear kale into a large mixing bowl. Drizzle olive oil on top, enough to lightly coat the pieces, but not drown. Mix together.
2. Add desired spices. Definitely add salt and pepper, but also add a pinch or two of something flavorful to spice things up—cumin, coriander, or cayenne are my suggestions. Then mix all together.
3. Evenly spread kale mixture onto baking sheets. Make sure to only spread one layer of kale per baking sheet, no more.
4. Heat in oven for 5-10 minutes, or until kale begins to turn brown, depending on how crispy you would like your chips.

Enjoy!

Abby says, "They are way better than potato chips!"



## "Hey! That's a good idea!"

**Kristine Nadolski**, VISTA with Wausau School District, is working with local AmeriCorps members to make sure that volunteer needs are met. This partnership with AmeriCorps members has helped to guide direct-service needs for volunteer work at FUN, a huge family-engagement event that Kristine helped plan.

### VOLUNTEERING

**Sarah Glassman**, VISTA with Maple Tree Elementary and Parents Plus, is working with the school's HIP Coordinator to plan family events that give parents and children the opportunity to learn together. They planned a family-friendly African Dance activity as

a part of the school's Black History program.

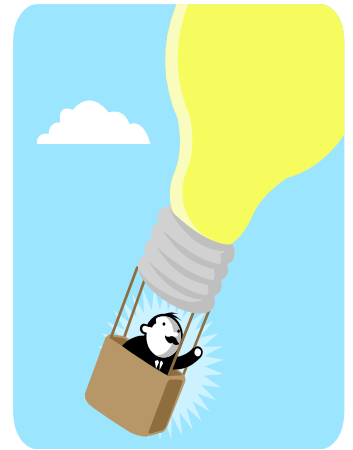
### PARENTING

**Brittany Williams**, VISTA with WEOP and the Youth Leadership Board, is collaborating with a food pantry as a way of connecting GEAR UP / EIP students to more service opportunities and different people within a larger Madison community.

### COLLABORATING

**Lizzy Lowrey**, VISTA with Racine Public Library, is partnering with the Racine Art Museum to help plan and implement the Arts Engagement Program for People with Alzheimer's and their caregivers.

### HEALTH AND NUTRITION



**Colleen Douglass**, VISTA with Vaughn Public Library, has worked to set up an employment and job skills training computer room at the library. This resource will allow computer space to be designated for patrons who are interested in focusing on job training and employment resources at the library.

### EMPLOYMENT AND JOB SKILLS TRAINING

## VISTAs in the News



### Josh Cowles and Sara Byrnes—Fond du Lac Public Library

Organized a free practice interview session conducted by a veteran human resources specialist, offered as part of Job Smart U. Job Smart U is a series of classes organized by the Fond du Lac Public Library's Opportunity Center.

<http://www.fdlreporter.com/article/20100207/FON0101/2070486/1985/Get-expert-job-interview-tips-at-Job-Smart-U>

### Sylvia Sedrak—Wausau Early Childhood Program

Organized a Sweetheart Pancake Breakfast as a fundraiser to benefit the Wausau School District's pre-kindergarten program.

<http://www.wsaw.com/home/headlines/84307607.html>

# Rethinking Leadership: Looking For Shining Eyes

By Betsy Prueter

As those who began your service this past summer will remember, the DVD presentation of “Leadership: The Art of Possibility” at Orientation in September (ah...remember September? warm weather, falling leaves, crisp air?) was an uplifting and inspiring way to start off the VISTA year. Ben Zander (conductor of the Boston Philharmonic) and his wife Rosamund have developed a unique approach to leadership that asks us to give power back to those we lead. And in that exchange, we experience real professional and personal growth as leaders.

So here we are, at the beginning of March, and if you’re anything like me, September is a distant memory. I thought that for some of us, this would be a good mid-year reminder, and for our newer VISTAs, something to think about throughout their service years. Here are some of Ben and Rosamund’s best tips for rethinking leadership.

## REMEMBER RULE #6

In the Zanders’ own words, Rule # 6 is “don’t take yourself so #%#@#% seriously. We can all use some perspective—especially when we experience frustration in our work. But let’s take a step back and breathe! Not only can this help ease tension, it can help to break down those challenges we might be up against daily.

## EVERYONE GETS AN “A”

This really challenges us to maintain a positive outlook. Treat everyone with respect and assume good will. Sometimes our preconceived notions about individuals might color the way we work with them. So let’s give everyone at A from the beginning. Start with the notion that they have earned it!

## AVOID THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

Who hasn’t experienced this? We get down, we get frustrated, we get discouraged, and because of all of that, we become negative. But avoiding the downward spiral helps us to remain positive (but also realistic) and keep ourselves from feeling helpless. Think of your fellow VISTAs as resources for avoiding the downward spiral especially when you need perspective, encouragement or just a boost!

## LOOK FOR THE SHINING EYES

We measure success in many different ways, but as leaders, we need to learn to read people. The “shining eyes” give you feedback about the impact you and your work has on the people you work with. So, take the time to read people’s faces and look for their enthusiasm.

# Fending off My Own March Madness

By Pen Bruskin



As much as I love our Wisconsin climate during seasonal changes, I am just about ready to bust out of my own skin every year in late February/early March. After a long winter of trudging through snow drifts, attempting to drive on half-plowed roads (typical Madison!), and too many weekends spent watching “Harry Potter” and “Lord of the Rings” as I attempt to escape Wisconsin’s bleak winters into glorified fantasy worlds, it’s fair to say that I am eagerly awaiting spring. I’m also pretty sure that I’m not the only one - it’s likely that many of us are ready to unleash some fierce energy; but where do we focus this momentum, and how can we make sure it doesn’t lead to more restlessness and anxiety?

Unless you’re planning on doing

another year with our project (I highly encourage thinking about our project’s VISTA Leader position), or you’re already enrolled in a graduate school program, you may be worried about finding a job, transitioning into a non-VISTA position, and playing the waiting game for positions with late fall start dates to magically appear. As you’re reading this, you’re probably aware that I’ve already done my share of sliding into this late winter restlessness and anxiety. However, I’m also starting to take a bit of my own advice as I alter the scope of how I think about potential career and life paths.

Rather than worrying about finding a job that will pay the bills, I’m trying to actively think about the opportunities that this upcoming end-of-service will make accessible to me. Rather than being stuck in a job or career path that

I’m not entirely sure about, I can completely switch gears and get into something new. This is also an opportunity for me to act on some of the things that I’ve been putting off for years: moving to another city, getting a job where I can travel, and generally allowing myself a chance to breathe as I embrace change. As stressful as change may be, now may be one of the most ideal times in our lives to embrace our fears and our goals. We have all made sacrifices so that we could live comfortably this year; we’re far from relying on a large income to feel financially stable. As I move forward with plans to make a cross-country move at the end of my term, I’m at a pretty good place as long as I can stay excited about change, fulfilling my wishes, and my capacity to stay comfortable with simplicity.

# March 2010 VISTA Events

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 <b>Play and Learn @</b> A.C. Kiefer - Wausau 3:30p–5:00p	2	3	4	5	6 <b>Family University Network @</b> John Muir Middle School—Wausau 8:00a–1:30p
7	8 <b>Play and Learn @</b> A.C. Kiefer - Wausau 3:30p–5:00p	9 <b>Sleepover at the Library @</b> A.C. Kiefer—Wausau 6:00p–7:00p	10	11 <b>Overcoming Challenging Work Histories Seminar</b> @ Fond du Lac Public Library 6:00p–7:30p	12	13 <b>Open Gym @</b> A.C. Kiefer—Wausau 9:00a–12:00p
14	15 <b>Play and Learn @</b> A.C. Kiefer - Wausau 3:30p–5:00p	16 <b>Math and Science Night @</b> Grant Elementary— Milwaukee 5:00p–7:30p	17 <b>Math Olympics @</b> Grant Elementary— Milwaukee <i>All-Day</i>	18 <b>Absolutely Incredible Kid Day</b> @ Northwoods Banquet Hall— Rhineland 5:00p–8:00p	19 <b>Parent Breakfast</b> @ Grant Elementary— Milwaukee Starts at 8:00a	20 <b>Gymnastics Clinic</b> @ A.C. Kiefer— Wausau 9:00a–10:00a
21	22 <b>Play and Learn @</b> A.C. Kiefer - Wausau 3:30p–5:00p	23	24	25 <b>Going Back to School Seminar @</b> Fond du Lac Public Library 6:00p–7:30p <b>Move More Night @</b> Birchwood School 5:30p–8:00p	26	27
28	29 <b>Play and Learn @</b> A.C. Kiefer - Wausau 3:30p–5:00p	30	31			

## EVENT CONTACTS

- For more information on events at A.C. Kiefer in Wausau, contact Sylvia Sedrak at [ssedrack@ausau.k12.wi.us](mailto:ssedrack@ausau.k12.wi.us)
- For more information on events at John Muir Middle School in Wausau, contact Kristine Nadolski at [knadolski@ausau.k12.wi.us](mailto:knadolski@ausau.k12.wi.us)
- For more information on events at Birchwood School in Birchwood, WI, please contact Sara Hubin at [sarahubin@hotmail.com](mailto:sarahubin@hotmail.com)
- For more information on events in Rhineland, please contact Anna Morgen at [morgeanna@rhineland.k12.wi.us](mailto:morgeanna@rhineland.k12.wi.us)
- For more information on events at Grant Elementary in Milwaukee, please contact Robyn Krimke at [krimkerb@milwaukee.k12.wi.us](mailto:krimkerb@milwaukee.k12.wi.us)
- For more information on events at the Fond du Lac Public Library, please contact Josh Cowles at [cowles@fdlpl.org](mailto:cowles@fdlpl.org)

*"Perseverance is a great element of success. If you only knock long enough and loud enough at the gate, you are sure to wake somebody up."*

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**



## Grant Opportunities

### McGraw-Hill Companies: Harold McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education

The 2008 Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education celebrates the theme of global awareness in U.S. education and recognizes those behind educational programs that help students develop the knowledge and skills they need to function as workers, citizens, and fulfilled individuals in an increasingly interconnected world. Maximum award: \$25,000. Eligibility: policy-makers, leaders in higher education, and school-based personnel.

Deadline: March 19, 2010.

[www.mcgraw-hill.com/prize/about\\_history.shtml](http://www.mcgraw-hill.com/prize/about_history.shtml)

### National Council for the Social Studies: Defense of Academic Freedom Award

The NCSS Defense of Academic Freedom Award is given annually to honor those who have distinguished themselves in defending the principles of academic freedom in specific controversies, in fostering academic freedom through advocacy, and in defending or advocating the freedom to teach and learn. Maximum award: \$1,500; commemorative gift; Annual Conference session presentation; publicity. Eligibility: classroom teachers, professionals in other areas of education, students, parents, community groups, and members of other organizations (preference will be

given to social studies educators) who are or have been engaged in activities that support academic freedom in the face of personal challenge or promote awareness of and support for academic freedom. The defense or advocacy of academic freedom must have been related to the teaching of social studies.

Deadline: March 21, 2010.

[www.socialstudies.org/awards/academicfreedom](http://www.socialstudies.org/awards/academicfreedom)

### Hitachi Foundation: Yoshiyama Young Entrepreneurs

The Yoshiyama Young Entrepreneurs Program supports young entrepreneurs who have formed financially viable businesses that create jobs, supply goods or services, or use internal management practices enabling low-wealth individuals the opportunity to achieve greater economic security. Maximum award: \$50,000 over two years, access to technical resources, and a peer learning community. Eligibility: entrepreneurs ages 18-29 who are operating businesses that are 1-5 years old and have been generating revenue for a minimum of the last 12 months.

Deadline: March 22, 2010.

[www.hitachifoundation.org/yoshiyama/index.html](http://www.hitachifoundation.org/yoshiyama/index.html)

**Questbridge: College Prep for Low-Income High School Juniors**  
Questbridge, a non-profit

organization dedicated to giving high-achieving low-income students resources during the college application process, is accepting applications for its College Prep Program for high school juniors. Maximum award: full scholarship to summer program, college admissions counseling, and attendance at college preparatory conferences. Eligibility: qualified low-income high school juniors.

Deadline: March 29, 2010.  
[www.questbridge.org/access/collegepretext/](http://www.questbridge.org/access/collegepretext/)

### Libri Foundation: Books for Children

The Libri Foundation Books for Children Grants donate new, quality, hardcover children's books to small, rural, public libraries across the country. Maximum award: varies. Eligibility: Libraries must be in a rural area, have a limited operating budget, and an active children's department. The average total operating budget of a Books for Children grant recipient must be less than \$40,000.



Deadline: April 15, 2010.  
[www.librifoundation.org/apps.html](http://www.librifoundation.org/apps.html)

### Montgomery County Poet Laureate Program: Sarah Mook Prize

The purpose of the Sarah Mook Memorial Poetry Contest is to acknowledge, encourage, and reward the efforts of student poets. Maximum award: \$100. Eligibility: students K-12.

Deadline: March 31, 2010.  
[www.a2pwebdesign.com/poetrywits/poetrycontest/sarahmook.htm](http://www.a2pwebdesign.com/poetrywits/poetrycontest/sarahmook.htm)

